

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

Abstract

Forest and Wildlife Department—Participatory Forest Management—Guidelines for implementation—Revised orders issued.

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FOREST AND WILDLIFE (E) DEPARTMENT

G.O(Ms) No. 8/98/F&WLD

Dated, Thiruvananthapuram, 16..1..1998

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- Read:- 1) G.O No. 84/97/F&WLD dated, 13..10..1997.
2). Lr. No. PC.658/97 dated, 23..12..1997 from the Chief Conservator of Forests (World Bank Project), Thiruvananthapuram.

ORDER

As per the Government Order read as 1st paper above. Government have issued guidelines for the implementation of Participatory Forest Management in Kerala. Now the Chief Conservator of Forests (World Bank Project), in this letter read as 2nd paper, has reported that the World Bank appraisal mission have suggested some modifications in the guidelines and hence requested to issue revised Government Order.

Government have examined the request in detail and are pleased to issue revised guidelines, for the implementation of Participatory Forest Management in Kerala, which is appended to this Order, in supersession of the Government Order read as 1st paper above.

The revised guideline is appended with the Government Order.

(By Order of the Government)
G. LEELA
Deputy Secretary to Government.

To

The Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India, New Delhi.
The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Development and Projects),
Thiruvananthapuram.
The Accountant General (Audit)/A&E, Thiruvananthapuram
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Section Officer

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA
FOREST AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT
GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The National Forest Policy, 1988 envisages people's involvement in the development, protection and management of forests. It is also increasingly being felt that forest management programmes need to be reoriented to respond to the needs of the rural people living in and around forest areas and that the forest produce like fuel wood, Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), timber etc. are made available to the forest dependent villagers preferentially so that village communities are motivated to help in the development and protection of Forests. Accordingly, Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests, in their letter dated 1-6-1990 had issued guidelines for involving village communities and voluntary agencies in regeneration of degraded forest lands. The State Governments were also requested to take appropriate action along the suggested lines. The guidelines suggested by the Government of India envisage the formulation of a Participatory Forest Management Scheme charged with the responsibilities of preparing plans (micro plans) for participation and managing the same as per the approved plan.

Increasing pressure of population on forests and the resultant forest degradation, the fragility of the ecosystem, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance of the area, are major concerns of the State. The fact that policing the forest resources alone is not enough to protect the forest from degradation and that the participatory management experience from all over the country bears testimony to the participatory approach in dealing with anthropogenic factors in forest protection, justifies the development of Participatory Forest Management (PFM) approach for protection of forests in Kerala where these factors have contributed to degradation to a sizable extent. Having realized the necessity of ensuring people's participation in effective protection and management of the forest resources in Kerala, it is decided to develop PFM programme in the State. Kerala being socio-politically different from other States in India, the PFM programme envisaged in the state will have to be developed through a number of pilot studies in selected areas designed to address different forest management problems. With a view to evolve the modalities and the related strategies in implementing this programme, detailed workshops, seminars and discussions were also held with all levels of forest officers, scientists, public, members of legislative assembly and NGOs. Study tours by forest officers were also conducted in other states where PFM is being practised.

As PFM is new to Kerala, initially it will be taken up in selected sites only. Pilot studies will be carried out at six sites in the first year. The strategy adopted will be "learning by doing". Apart from the periodical reviews, there shall be a state level review of the whole process after two years of the programme. Modifications, if any, will be introduced in the programme after the biennial review.

These guidelines outline the general principles of PFM. Considering the prevailing socio-political conditions in Kerala, PFM in Kerala may require different models for different socio-economic conglomerations. Therefore, adequate freedom and flexibility in design and implementation of the programme shall be given to the Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs). DFOs should be encouraged to take up experimental PFM projects with the approval of the concerned Conservator of Forests (CF). The objective of such experiments is to develop appropriate location specific PFM models suitable to Kerala.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the PFM programme in the State during the pilot phase are two fold:

1. To explore the potential of PFM in different forestry and socio-economic contexts having direct influence on factors like forest fires, grazing, encroachment, timber smuggling, unsustainable removal of NTFPs and environmental degradation.
2. To develop appropriate approaches to introduce PFM in Kerala.

3. SCOPE OF THE PROGRAMME

One of the major causes of forest degradation in Kerala is the biotic human pressure on forests. High density of human population, low per capita forest area and dependence of people on forests subsistence and income generation activities, justify the development of approaches involving people living in and around forests. Moreover, success stories reported from different parts of the country, encourage the state to develop PFM models for protection, development and management of forests in Kerala. Major factors contributing to forest degradation related to people-forest interaction in Kerala are the following:

- Forest fires
- Grazing
- Unsustainable harvesting of NTFPs such as green manure, fire wood, medicinal herbs and poles.
- Human-animal conflicts
- Forest encroachments
- Timber smuggling
- Gunja cultivation
- Poaching of wild animals
- Environmental degradation etc.

The PFM pilot programme will be designed to assess the potential of PFM to address these critical forestry problems through strategies for:

- Management of fires to reduce forest degradation
- Introduction of sustainable NTFP harvesting practices to reverse the declining trend of growth of valuable NTFPs.
- Stopping further encroachment into forest areas.
- Curbing illicit timber harvesting, which is leading to forest degradation and loss of revenue for the State.
- Reversing localized environmental degradation such as seasonal water shortages and soil erosion resulting from deforestation in watersheds/catchments

The programme will also consider different socio-economic contexts. It will be developed, to start with, in some settlements located inside forest areas Forest Settlements- (FS). In order to ensure that PFM programmes are developed in different situations villages having high, moderate as well as low dependence on forests, will be selected.

4. AREAS TO BE SELECTED FOR PFM

Keeping the above factors in view, the Range officer (RO) shall select degraded natural forests and plantations where conditions are suitable for introduction of PFM approach. These areas may include:

- i. Scattered and fragmented degraded forest lands in the vicinity of the villages, facing encroachment and conservation problems.
- ii. Fringes of forest areas adjoining villages
- iii. Forest areas adjoining tribal hamlets
- iv. Forest areas encroached after 1-1-1977 and evicted by the Kerala Forest Department (KFD)

5. PROCEDURE FOR DEVELOPING PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT (PFM)

Under PFM the agreed forest management activities will be planned, implemented, maintained and monitored by the village institutions-Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS) constituted for the purpose with the help of suitable facilitators and the KFD. Participatory process first requires creating a good rapport, trust and partnership between the KFD field staff and the local people. The process of PFM involves the following phases: *Entry phase, Planning phase, Implementation phase and Monitoring phase*. Activities involved in each of these phases will be as follows:

i. Entry Phase (period – two months)

Activities in this phase include.

- Selection of the area
- Selection of a principal consultant
- Appointment of state level PFM Co-ordinator
- Selection of training institutes
- Training, extension and motivation of the KFD staff as well as the local people.
- Selection of Social Intermediaries (SI) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)
- Formation of Planning Support Team.

Intended outcomes for entry phase will be :

- Identification of area for PFM approach.
- KFD staff and local people are trained in PFM
- All executive staff for PFM have been selected

ii. Preparatory Phase (period- next two months)

The activities in this phase include:

- Problem identification
- Participatory Rural Appraisal (PA)
- VSS formation
- VSS executive committee formation

The intended outcome for preparatory phase are:

- Identification of the problems to be addressed through PFM
- Formation of VSS and VSS Executive Committee (VSSEC)
- Finalization of bylaw of VSS and VSSEC

iii. Planning Phase (period – next four months)

The activities in this phase include:

The preparation of a written micro plan document, which essentially contains the details of:

- PRA exercise for the assessment of natural resources and its utility pattern.
- Problem identification as well as potential of the area from villagers' and KFD's perspective.
- Agreements on the objectives of the plan.
- Suggested activities for protection, maintenance etc. (i.e. why, where, who, what, when)
- Roles and responsibilities-including rules for rights and privileges, management of funds etc.
- Terms and conditions for sharing of costs and benefits.

- Procedure for evaluation and amendments to the programme.

The intended outcomes of this phase will be:

- The formulation of a detailed micro plan in consultation with the local community addressing all aspects of resource management of that particular locality.

iv. Implementation Phase (period- next 40 months)

Activities in this phase include:

- Site demarcation
- Participatory Forest Rehabilitation (PFR) works
- Non forestry activities
- Maintenance of accounts
- Overseeing of roles and responsibilities

To intended outcomes of this phase will be

- The actual execution of the micro plan prescriptions
- Assessment of the roles and responsibilities of KFD and VSS

v. Monitoring and Evaluation Phase (period-first month to 60 month or more)

The activities in this phase include:

- Monitoring of roles and responsibilities
- Evaluation of forest rehabilitation
- Termination of the programme, if necessary, after clearly stating the reason for the same.

The intended out come of this phase will be

- Monitoring and evaluation of the entire programme including suggestions and modifications for further continuance.

The KFD officials should actively involve in each of the above *phase*. The SIs shall be engaged for working along with the villagers and forest officials in all the phases. The initial meeting with the villagers may be facilitated through local NGOs and Panchayats.

The selection of the PFM area shall be done on a watershed basis. The selection of the participating village community shall be done on the basis of Panchayat ward/identifiable hamlet/user group depending on the local situation and the need to have an equitable and identifiable participating community. While selecting the area and identifying the participating village community/user groups, the DFO will initiate actions for entry phase activities. In the course of such contacts, the Range Officer (RO) may fix up a date in consultation with the villagers for convening a meeting of the participating village community.

Range Officer will convene the village community meeting on the appointed date after giving due publicity for the same in the locality. On the prescribed date, a village level institution namely, Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS) shall be formed.

The field of activity of the individual samithi shall be the selected areas in the nearby forests and it shall be surveyed and demarcated in the field.

For all subsequent meetings of the VSS, the members secretary of the VSSEC shall be the Convenor.

6. CONSTITUTION OF THE VANA SAMRAKSHANA SAMITHI (VSS)

Every household in the selected ward/hamlet/user-groups will have the option of participating in the Samithi. Any two adult members of a household can participate in the VSS

and out of the two one should be a woman. They shall register their names with the Range Officer on a payment of a sum of Rs. 5/- per house-hold which shall be credited to the Core Fund of the VSS. The SC/ST members are exempted from the payment of registration fee, for the purpose sharing of benefits as per clause 12, each family will be considered as a single unit. The approval of the DFO is mandatory for the VSS. The DFO shall issue a registration number units date of approval to each VSS approved by him. New members to the VSS shall be admitted once in a year on the basis of recommendation to this effect by VSSEC to the DFO.

The President of the VSSEC will be the ex-officio president of the VSS also.

7. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VSS

A General Body Meeting (GBM) of the VSS shall be held once in every six months to review the actions taken in pursuance to the approved micro plan, status of forest protection and functioning of the VSSEC. Under special circumstances, the GBM of the VSS may be convened on request of not less than 1/3rd of the VSS members to the Convenor of the GBM. Quorum for GBM will be 1/3rd of the tribal members.

The Secretary of the VSSEC shall be the Convenor of the GBM of the VSS and shall maintain the minutes of the meeting

The members of VSS individually and collectively shall be responsible for

- a) ensuring protection of the PFM areas from encroachment, grazing, fires, illicit felling, poaching, thefts etc.
- b) ensuring execution of the activities in accordance with the approved micro plan through the executive committee.
- c) making other Villagers are of the importance of nature conservation and forest protection.
- d) ensuring protection of other forest areas not covered under PFM

Members of VSS shall have the power to:

- apprehend the forest offenders and hand them over to the forest officers for taking action under the provision of the relevant Acts and Rules. Where forest offenders have been handed over to the concerned forest officers, the concerned officer shall be responsible to report back to the VSSEC the action taken by him.

8. CONSTITUTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

After formation of the VSS as explained above, VSSEC shall be constituted from the members of VSS to carry out the approved PFM plan, the micro plan. The VSSEC shall consist of the following members.

- | | | |
|------|--|---------------------------------|
| i. | Nine elected representatives from the VSS (of the 9 members; at least 3 shall be women. There shall also be proportional representations from SC/ST communities (rounded off to the higher number. | Member |
| ii. | Grama Panchayat member of the concerned Panchayat ward. | Ex-officio member |
| iii. | A representative of an active local NGO (nominated by the DFO) | Ex-officio member |
| iv. | A nominee from the Tribal Development Department (only in the case of VSS in which tribal members exceed 1/3 of the total membership) | Ex-officio member |
| v. | Forest/Forest Guard having jurisdiction over the area. | Ex-officio
Member Secretary. |

The Committee shall elect the president from the elected members. The term of President shall be co-terminus with that of the committee. Only the elected members shall have voting rights. 1/3 of the members of the VSSEC shall constitute the quorum. The term of the committee shall be two years.

- vi) The Ex-officio member secretary shall call the meeting of the VSSEC in consultation with the president and shall record and maintain the minutes of the meeting.
- vii) The RO shall be the returning officer for the election of members of VSSEC in the GBM of the VSS.
- viii) The approval of the DFO is mandatory for the VSSEC.

9. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

- i. The VSSEC shall meet at least once in every month.
- ii. The member secretary shall be responsible for sending the minutes of the meeting of the VSSEC to the RO for information and advice. In case the Forest Range Officer finds that the decisions of the VSSEC are contrary to the approved micro plan or to the relevant Acts and Rules, he shall report the matter to the DFO & the Conservator of Forests (CF) immediately and inform the committee also. The decision of the DFO on this will be binding on the committee.
- iii. If any member of the VSS is found to indulge in acts against the various forest laws and rules and becomes an accused in a forest offence or acts against the approved micro plan, he shall be debarred from the VSS by the VSSEC.
- iv. The VSSEC along with the Member Secretary shall be responsible for preparation and execution of the micro plan.
- v. The VSSEC shall be responsible for ensuring the general protection of forests.
- vi. The VSSEC shall be responsible for implementing the VSS Operations Fund and VSS Core Fund and for maintaining proper accounts of the expenditure incurred, in the prescribed formats and procedure.

10. TERMINATION OF VSS/VSSSEC

The DFO for sufficient reasons on record shall have powers to dissolve the VSSEC and / or the VSS after conducting due enquiry. The VSSEC shall be given an opportunity to appeal against such orders to the CF within one month. The order of the CF in the matter shall be final.

11. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE KERALA FOREST DEPARTMENT

- i) KFD shall provide technical assistance in the formulation and implementation of the micro plan.
- ii) KFD shall make all efforts to get the finances for the implementation of the annual activities specified in the micro plan. For activities outside the micro plan, the KFD shall facilitate in procuring sufficient funds from other departments.
- iii) If the DFO is convinced that the VSS has carried out their duties satisfactorily in the protection of forest from encroachment, theft, illicit felling, fire, grazing etc, and for the activities specified in the micro plan, the amount earmarked for these works will be credited in the account of the committee under VSS Operations Fund. The fund can be utilised by the committee for the implementation of the various development programmes decided by them.
- iv) The DFO or his nominated officer shall be responsible for the review of the activities of the VSS every quarter. The monthly review shall be conducted by the RO. The CF will review the programme every six months. The shortcomings and the observations noted during the review, shall be rectified by the committee immediately.

- v) If the DFO finds that the funds provided for the activities in the micro plan are not utilised according to the plan or agreed conditions, he shall stop the implementation of the micro plan.
- vi) The KFD will arrange for providing necessary training to VSS members in various forestry activities like raising nursery, planting etc.
- vii) The VSS members shall be trained to maintain the accounts.
- viii) Forest officials shall inform the VSS about the VSS provision of forest Acts and Rules and give details of forest offenders to the committee in order to get the necessary timely assistance of the committee in detection of offences and successful prosecution.

12. SHARING OF BENEFITS.

On satisfactory achievement of the aims of VSS in terms of protection of forests and implementation of the activities in the micro plan the VSS will be entitled to the benefits given below. The benefits will be sanctioned only on the recommendations of the VSSEC. Harvesting of all the forest produce in PFM area will be as per the silvi-cultural principles.

1. The VSS shall be entitled to collect the specified quantities and items of NTFP from the PFM areas as per the prescriptions in the micro plan.
2. The VSS shall be entitled to collect the specified quantities of fodder, fuel-wood, green manure or such other products from PFM area for bonafide use of its members as per the prescriptions in the micro plan.
3. The VSS shall be entitled to collect specified quantities of bamboo and reeds on segniorage rates from PFM area for bonafide use of its members as per the prescriptions in the micro plan.
4. The VSS shall be entitled to 10% of the net revenue of the harvested forest produce from the plantation raised and protected by VSS under PFM, the VSS will also be entitled to 100% of the net revenue from the NTFPs from the forests and services rendered within the PFM area. The amount so received shall be credited to the VSS Core Fund. 50% of this amount shall be utilised for the developmental activities other than forestry activities, 25% may be distributed among the members or utilised as decided by the VSSEC and the balance 25% will be kept under a separate head for future sustained management of forests after the project period. This pattern of distribution is only a guideline and the VSS however, will have full power to decide on how to spend their benefits.

13. MICRO PLAN

The VSSEC shall prepare a micro plan for a period of 10 years in consultation with the participating community user-groups, NGOs and the KFD. The micro plan shall be prepared through a process of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) involving all sections particularly women, SC/ST and user-groups.

- The plan shall include the prescriptions for the management of forests and village resource under the control of the VSS.
- The plan shall contain the details on production of fuel-wood, timber, fodder and other forest produce and annual harvestable quantities.
- The plan shall prescribe measures for the control of excessive biotic pressure on forests, for protection and restoration of forests to ensure sustainable flow of goods and services.
- The plan shall provide sustainable management prescriptions for the area by detailing harvesting practices, areas to be tackled and the yield. It shall also contain a distribution plan for all forest benefits.
- The plan shall include other development programmes required by the communities which will help in reducing dependency on the forests.

- The plan shall specify the activities to be supported by the KFD should be monitored and prescribe mechanisms for amending the plan whenever necessary.
- The plan shall essentially cover various aspects related to resource management and development such as:
 - i. Forest Protection (i.e, demarcation of areas, prevention of fire, grazing, unauthorized entry, felling of trees, green manure collection, harvesting of forest produce etc.)
 - ii. **Forest maintenance** (i.e., silvi-cultural practices, regeneration, rehabilitation, soil and water conservation etc.)
 - iii. **NTFP Development** (i.e, planting and maintenance of fuel, fodder, medicinal plants, pasture, green manure and other activities promoting sustainable harvesting and improved marketing of NTFP by value addition)
 - iv. **Resource Management on Non-Forest Lands** (i.e, soil and water conservation measures in the fringe villages).
 - v. **Other activities** – Community development requirements of the village.

The micro plan, thus prepared shall be presented in the GBM of the VSS for its approval. It shall be then sent to the DFO who in turn shall forward it to the CF with his comments and modifications, if any. The CF will have the authority for effecting amendments in the plan, if need be. All activities covered under any other approved plan/Project for the area selected for the PFM, shall be included in the micro plan. But no non-forestry activity or any activity contrary to the existing Acts and Rules shall be undertaken in the forest areas.

The approved micro plan will be implemented through the VSSEC.

14. VSS OPERATIONS FUND

1. The cost of investments in planting, soil & water conservation measures and contribution to the protection of forests from the KFD will be put in the VSS operations fund.
2. All the forest development activities would be funded through this fund in accordance with the provisions built in the micro plan. Outflows from this fund would be
 - Cost of planting and other forestry investments in accordance with the provisions of the micro plan.
 - Share of benefits to the VSS/ member of VSS as agreed and set down in the rules.
3. In the beginning, an advance will be given to the VSS for undertaking the forestry activities in the PFM areas. On successful execution of the works, the vouchers submitted by the VSS will be passed by the KFD in accordance with the FSR and reimbursed to the VSS.

15. CORE FUND

A core fund shall be constituted by the VSS for the other developmental activities and individual share of benefits to members of VSS. The VSS will contribute to this fund initially from the membership fee collected for becoming a member of the VSS and subsequently from the benefits received by it by way of implementation of the microplan. The VSS can utilize these funds, for various developmental activities and sharing of benefits among the members as per the approved microplan and sustained management of forests after the project period.

16. MAINTENANCE OF ACCOUNTS UNDER THE VSS OPERATIONS AND CORE FUNDS

All financial transactions of the VSS shall be carried out through the two accounts (VSS operation fund and core fund) jointly operated by the designated member from VSSEC and the member secretary from the KFD in any nationalized/scheduled bank. The accounts shall be kept and audited as per the prescriptions in microplan.

17. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

A Memorandum of Understanding in the appended format will be signed between the KFD and the VSSEC before implementing the PFM programme.

18. REVIEW OF PILOT PHASE

The pilot programme will be reviewed annually in a workshop organized at the state level and modifications, if any required, will be made to the pilot programme and the guidelines.

19. RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR PARTICIPATING OFFICERS

The staff of KFD, Sis and NGOs will be given adequate training (through coaching tours etc.) in PFM during the project period. Government will appoint a forest officer not below the rank of a CF as state level co-ordinator.

A PFM consultant will be selected to assist the state level PFM programme co-ordinator.

Three research studies, one each on forest encroachments, timber smuggling and incentives for successful PFM in Kerala, will be contracted out as a part of PFM programme in the state.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

A memorandum of understanding in the following format shall be signed between the Executive Committee of the VSS and the Range Officer (on behalf of Forest Department) before the starting of the implementation of the Microplan.

We, the President and Secretary of the Executive Committee of the VSS ofVillage of.....Forest Range (on behalf of the VSS) do hereby undertake individually and collectively to perform the duties and shoulder the responsibility as detailed in Government Order No.....dated.....for proper management, planning and protection of the forest areas as per the Appendix given below.

APPENDIX

- 1. *Name of the Committee* :
- 2. *District* :
- 3. *Forest Division* :
- 4. *Forest Range* :
- 5. *Village* :
- 6. *PFM Forest area (Surveyed sketch should be signed by both the parities)* :
- 7. *Legal status of the PFM forest area* :
- 8. *Boundaries of the PFM forest area* :

North—
 South—
 East—
 West—

We understand that the usufructory benefits as detailed in the aforesaid GO shall be allowed only upon satisfactory observance of rules by this Executive Committee and by members of the VSS as per the aforesaid GO. A copy of the aforesaid GO is annexed herewith duly signed on every page in evidence of our having understood the same in letter and spirit. It is hereby agreed that this MOU will come into effect from

President of the Executive Committee : *Signature*
Name and Address

Secretary of Executive Committee : *Signature*
Name and Address

Forest Range Officer (on behalf of KFD) : *Signature*
Name and Address

Witness 1. *Signature*
Name and Address

2. *Signature.....*
Name and Address

Place:
Date